DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 772 CE 023 481

AUTHOR	Vasa, Stanley F.: And Others
TITLE	Career Education for the Handicapped Child: A Guide to Parent Education Programming. Information Series No. 180.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.: Ohio State Univ., Columbus. National Center for Research in Vocational Education.
PUB DATE	79
CONTRACT	400-76-0122
NOTE	33p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Center Publications, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210 ($2.35)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Development: *Career Education: *Delivery Systems: *Handicapped Students: Information Sources: Job Application: Job Skills: Parent Child Relationship: *Parent Role: *Program Design
IDENTIFIERS	Information Analysis Products

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the procedures utilized in developing a program model to assist parents of handicapped students in learning about their roles in enhancing the development of their children's skills and attitudes necessary for the work world. The first section discusses three basic assumptions about parents and their role in education: (1) their concern about their children; (2) their right to be involved in their child's educational program; and (3) their effectiveness as teachers. Questions that parents have about such topics as career education, parental support of the school, career development at home, parental support of their child's job selection and procurement process, and information resources are examined briefly in the next section. The third discusses a program delivery system, including such elements as program goals, duration, resources, and evaluation. Appended materials include six career education objectives for the handicapped child, suggested parent activities, a directory of organizations related to the handicapped, and a fact sheet concerning the problems faced by parents of handicapped children. (CT)

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ED179772

Information Series #180

CAREER EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED CHILD: A GUIDE TO PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

written by

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1979

CE 023 181

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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FUNDING INFORMATION

Project Title:	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Contract Number:	NIE-C-400-76-0122
Educational Act Under Which the Funds were Administered:	Vocational Educational Amendments of 1976, P. L. 94-482
Source of Contract:	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare National Institute of Education Washington, D.C.
Contractor:	The National Center for Research in Vocational Education The Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio
Project Director:	Marla Peterson
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FOREWORD

The Educational Resources Information Center on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is one of sixteen clearinghouses in a nationwide information system that is funded by the National Institite of Education. One of the functions of the Clearinghouse is to interpret the literature that is entered in the ERIC data base. This paper should be of particular interest to teacher and parent educators.

The profession is indebted to Stanley Vasa, Allen Steckelberg, and Gary Meers for their scholarship in the preparation of this paper. Recognition also is due Offa Lou Jenkins, Winthrop College; Curt Armstrong, Central Ohio Employability Council; and Nancy Lust, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, for their critical review of the manuscript prior to its final revision and publication. Robert D. Bhaerman, Assistant Director for Career Education at the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, coordinated the publication's development. Cathy Thompson assisted in the editing of the manuscript and Bonna Somerlott typed the final draft.

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Education

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DESC::*Parent Role; *Program Design; *Handicapped Students; Job Skills; *Career Education; *Career Development; Job Application; Information Sources; *Delivery System; Parent Child Relationship

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, parents of handicapped students have not been involved in the career exploration, career selection, and career placement processes for their children. This primarily was because of the extremely limited educational options available. However, with the passage of P.L. 94-142, parents are now becoming more involved in the educational planning for their children by means of the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). This involvement in the development of the IEP provides an opportunity for parents to be more directly involved in the career education decision making process. Parents need information and resources in order to understand their role and to effectively help in the career exploration/selection/placement processes.

This brief paper will explore the procedures utilized in developing a program model to assist parents in learning about their role in enhancing the development of skills and attitudes necessary for the work world.

SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The parent education program model discussed below has been developed by and is intended for career education, vocational education, and special education teachers, in order to assist them in working with and guiding parents of the handicapped.

The model has three basic assumptions about parents and their role in education:

(1) Parents care more about their children than the school does.

(2) Parents have a right to know about and be involved in their child's educational program.

(3) Parents can be effective teachers.

Assumption 1, *parents care more about their children than the school does*, is basic to working with parents. Educators can easily assume they care more for children since they often have formalized written goals. They rarely see children with their parents; often they assume that the lack of involvement in the educational program is due to the fact parents do not care. In reality, parents may lack the knowledge or feel insecure in working with educators. The parents of the child are the only individuals who maintain a physiological and psychological vested interest in their child. School administrators and teachers must view each child in terms of the other students, the curriculum, the cost of education, and other concerns which do not relate to the best interests of the particular child. For example, when making a decision about programming for a handicapped child, it is likely that a school or teacher may choose the alternative which requires less time, energy, or money and, therefore, leaves a greater amount of available resources for the majority of the students.

Parents not only have a vested interest in their child, but they also have the ultimate legal and moral responsibility. Historically, the task of educating children has been the function of the family unit. Only in the last century has the public school assumed this responsibility. With the advent of the public school came "the expert"; parents became more removed from direct involvement in their child's education. Recently, due to judicial decisions and legislation (specifically P.L. 94-142), this responsibility has been reasserted by parents. This responsibility implies parental controlling influence in their child's education. The establishment of due process procedures demonstrates the rights of parents in the education of the handicapped child.

Assumption 2, *parents have a right to know about and be involved in their child's education*, follows directly from the responsibilities established in assumption 1. Parents have legal rights to be informed of what takes place during the time the school has *assumed* the responsibility for their children. Parents can and should be provided with information which allows them to make significant contributions to their child's education in the identification process, in programming (the IEP process), and in providing meaningful activities and support in the home.

In order to have parents meaningfully involved in their child's education, open communication must be established between parents and the schools. School staff members must assume the role of promoting this communication and provide parents with the information they need to make the parent-school partnership a positive one. Typically, information and resources have been provided parents through conferences, IEP staffings, and written communication. More formal parent education programs are needed in order to open this communication further and achieve better programming for individual students.

Assumption 3, *parents can be effective teachers*, has been well supported in the literature (Kelly, 1973; MacDonald, 1971; Berkowitz and Graziano, 1972; Denhoff, 1960; Walder, et al., 1971). Teachers, particularly those who work with exceptional children, are often viewed as having magical abilities and large amounts of patience. In reality, teaching exceptional children is a matter of knowledge and skills -- not magic. It is not necessary that parents delegate complete responsibility for the education of their children to the schools -- nor is it possible. Parents can effectively support the education of their child if they are provided with information about important goals and with training in techniques for achieving these goals. School personnel are the best source of information for parents about teaching. It is important for the school to provide parents with information about training through both formal and informal contacts. A danger inherent in the lack of formal interaction between the school and the parents is that school personnel may underestimate the potential that parents have in making positive and rewarding contributions to their child's education.

Exceptional children do not need to be taught solely by "experts" in special environments. In fact, these children can and are learning outside the confines of school walls or special classes. Career education has contributed significantly in opening the eyes of educators to the resources available outside of the school. Parents are in a particularly advantageous position to use these outside opportunities to expand their child's education. With the aid of good teaching skills (such as establishing behavioral goals, utilizing systematic reinforcement, and identifying successful and unsuccessful teaching techniques), parents can provide home and community experiences which contribute to their child's learning.

It is evident from these three assumptions that parents of handicapped children deserve and have the right to take an active role in the education of their own sons and daughters. Parents' roles in this context are threefold. They are primarily advocates for their child in the formal educational system. The second role is that of teachers. In this role, parents need to provide activities and opportunities which are purposeful and rewarding as learning experiences for their child. In the third role, parents are models. In this role, parents encourage their child through demonstration of appropriate attitudes and habits appropriate to adult life skills.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

If parents are to maximize their child's learning, they need information and resources which will allow them to fulfill these roles satisfactorily. The purpose of this particular program model is to provide parents of exceptional children with information designed to assist them in assuming these roles in their child's career development. The model provides information relating to the following key questions:

- What is career education?
- How can parents support their child's education in school?
- How can parents enhance their child's career development at home?
- How can parents support their child in the job selection and procurement process?
- What are some of the main information resources for parents in the career awareness, training and the decision-making process?

WHAT IS CAREER EDUCATION?

The program model operates under the premise that parents will become active partners in their child's career education. If this is to occur, parents must have a working knowledge of what career education is. The objectives include knowledge of conceptual definition of career education, a rationale for the

existence of career education, basic theories of learning and career development, and the long- and short-range goals of career education, career education's relationship to the overall curriculum, and career education's relationship to employment. Information is presented as unique to handicapped individuals only on a pragmatic level. The basic theories, constructs, and goals of career education do not differ for handicapped individuals.

Providing parents with a basic conceptual overview of career education serves as a fundamental component of the parent education program. The remaining subsections of the program apply this basic framework to information of a more specific and pragmatic nature. The overview is intended as the initial step in helping parents establish goals for themselves and their children. Parents become most effective in their roles as advocate, teacher, and model in the career development process after establishing specific goals.

HOW CAN PARENTS SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION IN SCHOOL?

One of the roles the parents of the exceptional child assume is that of advocate. Parents assume this role when they actively support the child's education in school. This component provides parents information to enable them to be more effective advocates.

It is important to point out that the role of advocate is not synonymous with opposition to school programs. The function of advocacy is to ensure that the child's best interests are being taken into consideration. These interests may most often be served by closer cooperation between parents and schools. For this reason the initial objective of this component reiterates the rationale for the parents' commitment to their child's education and, in particular, to their career development.

The second objective of this program component is to provide parents with information concerning federal and state legislation relevant to the education and placement of the handicapped. The information is extremely important in order to protect parents' rights in ensuring an appropriate education for their child. In particular, this includes information about P.L. 94-142 and P.L. 94-482 as they relate to identification procedures, the Individual Educational Plan, and due process procedures.

Knowledge also is provided relating to the rights of the child and of the parents, such as P.L. 93-112, section 504 and relating to schools and legislation, such as the Buckley Amendment on school records. The purpose of these activities is to "arm" parents with the necessary information in order to allow them to ask for and receive services consistent with the requirements of the law and the unique needs of their child. Although this information may appear to threaten the school, it should not. The policy of keeping parents uninformed, obviously, is unwise. In the long run, that policy can often lead to misunderstanding and hostility towards the school.

The third objective of this program component is oriented toward providing parents with knowledge in order to aid them in making a positive contribution to their child's career development in school. The information presented addresses the parents' roles in educational staffings and parent-teacher conferences. It includes basic facts about the following items: staffing procedures, identifying parents' responsibilities and potential contributions to the staffing, specific suggestions to aid parents in observing their child, reporting this information, identifying their child's needs, suggesting accommodations, and defining career education goals for their child. Also included are suggested ways parents can serve as resources to the school in general.

HOW CAN PARENTS ENHANCE THEIR CHILD'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT AT HOME?

As the primary "significant other", parents make a major contribution to the education and socialization of their child through the home environment. Parents, obviously, have the earliest and most numerous contacts with their child. They assume two important roles in their child's development: as models and as teachers.

Parents serve as the initial models for nearly all aspects of the child's behavior. Children receive their first stimulation for speech and communication from interaction with parents. Likewise, parents provide models for a child in awareness of roles related to work and the parents' occupations. It is important for the parents to realize that the models they portray play an important role in the decisions their child will make in the future.

Parents also serve as the first teachers. They provide the stimulation and parameters in which learning occurs. They control the environment for young children and, to a lesser extent, for children as they mature. Basic life skills and attitudes are taught through both modeling and actual training. Parents, then, play the initial role as teachers in the career development process through the establishment of life skills and attitudes.

A key factor in the success of parents fulfilling these roles is the establishment of clear goals for their child. An emphasis of this component is to review and apply the description of career education presented in the initial component, that is, setting goals. A second emphasis is on providing parents with knowledge of how to "structure" for success, how to apply behavioral techniques, and how to determine if they have been effective. The final emphasis is on providing parents with specific strategies, techniques, and activities designed to meet career development goals. As a corollary, parents also are provided with suggestions for dealing with common problems which may arise.

HOW CAN PARENTS SUPPORT THEIR CHILD IN THE JOB SELECTION AND PROCUREMENT PROCESS?

The efforts of the school and the parents are, or should be, directed toward maximizing the handicapped individuals' career success. Career education receives its first real empirical test with the job selection and procurement process. Schools traditionally have not played a major role in the transition of the child from school to work. Therefore, handicapped adolescents and their parents are virtually left to their own resources in selecting and procuring a job.

This program component serves two purposes: (1) to provide information to aid parents in supporting their sons or daughters in selecting and procuring a job and (2) to relate the goals of the previous components to the culmination of the process. Information is provided under the following topics:

- Legal rights of the handicapped in employment and business compliance with applicable legislation

- Available services to aid in the job selection and procurement process (U.S. Employment Service, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.)
- Assessing readiness for work
- Identifying available jobs
- Identifying employment assets and job skills
- Identifying the skills and assets in which the employer is interested
- Presenting assets and skills to the potential employer
- Suggesting accommodations to the potential employer
- Following up on the application
- Important first steps after getting a job

WHAT ARE INFORMATION RESOURCES
FOR PARENTS IN CAREER AWARENESS,
TRAINING, AND THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS?

The program model intends to provide parents with information which will allow them to identify and use locally available materials in their roles of advocate, model, and teacher. The model uses representatives of the various agencies themselves, when possible, to explain their organizations' functions in aiding handicapped children and their parents. In addition, suggestions are provided to parents on the use of these agencies.

A second inportant element of this program component is a resource guide designed as a reference and guide to the use of other major agencies which provide information or services to the handicapped.

PROGRAM DELIVERY SYSTEM

After identifying the informational needs of parents and establishing the program objectives, the next task in developing a parent education program is designing a delivery system. The system delineates what activities or materials will be presented,

how they will be prepared, where they will be presented, and who will present them. Clearly, the delivery system is a key factor in the success or failure of the program. The information must be presented in a manner which maintains the interest of the participants and allows them to learn as effectively and efficiently as possible.

In establishing the system, several principles need to be considered. The following elements should be reviewed when planning for inservice or educational programs for parents:

PROGRAMS SHOULD BE GOAL DIRECTED

All programs should involve a specific purpose and a delineation of expected outcomes. Parents need to know what will be expected of them and what they in turn can expect to learn.

PROGRAMS SHOULD BE LIMITED IN DURATION

A major consideration in planning is to determine the minimum time needed to achieve the objectives. There is an optimal amount of time during which learning occurs most efficiently. Long periods of instruction compete with fatigue, boredom, and other priorities for the attention of the audience. This is a particularly important factor when the audience is not accustomed to participating in formal learning activities. The planner, therefore, needs to utilize every minute of the available time engaging participants in meaningful activities.

PROGRAM RESOURCES SHOULD BE
FLEXIBLE WHEN FUNDS ARE LIMITED

It is necessary to realize that resources are often limited. Media and published materials may not be readily available. It may be necessary to adapt and examine existing school resources. The proper utilization of professional staff in meeting the objectives is the key factor. The model for programming must provide a means for career, vocational, and special educators to be successful in parent education.

PROGRAMS MUST BE VARIABLE

Each learner differs in specific needs, interests, and entering skills. The appropriateness of the information presented influences the strength of the parents' commitment to the program goals. Planners need to be alert to the wide variety of ways to convey information to parents. The system should allow parents to take advantage of the alternative ways of obtaining information.

PROGRAMS MUST BE
AMENABLE TO EVALUATION

It is important to insure that the program objectives can be measured. Educators need data to support the effectiveness of the components.

Several basic tenets must be considered in dealing with parents. Remember that parents often enter these situations with a number of apprehensions and concerns. A list of such tenets are provided for guidance of this process:

- Parents have set habits and philosophies about child rearing.
- Parents of the handicapped have developed a certain amount of resistance to suggestions from authorities.
- Parents have other interests and responsibilities.
- Parents often are bewildered by the options available to them.
- Parents have frustrations and concerns about services previously rendered to their children.
- Parents are sometimes suspicious of the school.
- Parents have a limited amount of free time for inservice education.
- Parents can assimilate a limited amount of information which might be contrary to their individual philosophies.
- Parents can change.

- Parents have creative ideas and experiences.
- Parents also have pride.
- Parents may secretly be afraid of failing in the rearing of their children.
- Parents are individuals who have developed behaviors consistent with their values, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Parents do not like to be talked down to or belittled for their failures.
- Parents have decisions to make and problems to solve.

These tenets have been included in a manual which accompanies the program model. The manual provides concrete suggestions on establishing rapport with participants; collecting, selecting, and sequencing activities; providing feedback; evaluating program success; modifying the model to meet local needs; and listings of resource materials.

The program is delivered in five units based on the five areas of information identified above. Each unit contains activities relating to establishing rapport, pre-post tests, and specific information about needed resources. The unit also contains parent involvement activities. (See Appendix B.) Evaluation of each unit is based on parent reaction to the activities and materials and on pre-post test results. User manuals will be available at the conclusion of the field testing of the program. (Note: Further information can be obtained by writing to the authors at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln.)

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APPENDIX A

SIX CAREER EDUCATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE HANDICAPPED CHILD

1. To possess and project a positive self-concept
2. To become independent and self-sufficient, socially and economically
3. To develop methods and means for solving problems and making decisions
4. To demonstrate responsibility for tasks which are undertaken
5. To have awareness of educational and occupational options, and the possible accommodations for their handicapping conditions
6. To possess a positive attitude toward work

APPENDIX B

SUGGESTED PARENT ACTIVITIES

I

GOAL: To develop methods and means for solving problems and decision making.

OBJECTIVE: The child will be able to use a model for systematic decision making and problem solving.

RATIONALE: Systematic decision making is the most effective way to make the responsible decisions required of the handicapped individual.

SUGGESTED PARENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Allow the child to participate in problem solving and decision making in the home. Use a basic problem solving model in making the decisions, e.g., where to go on a vacation.

2. Assist the child in making simple decisions concerning what clothes to wear depending on the weather, e.g., a winter coat or a light sweater when it is snowing.

3. Assist the child in making a decision concerning how to spend one's allowance, e.g., spend $0.50 on candy and bubble gum or save it until there is enough to buy a special toy.

SUGGESTED EVALUATION:

Allow the child to make a decision or solve a problem without input from the parent. Discuss the outcome in relation to the suggested model.

II

GOAL: To develop social and economic independence to the greatest degree possible.

OBJECTIVE: The child will be able to use public transportation in the community.

RATIONALE: The ability to use public transportation is important if the individual is to function as independently as possible.

SUGGESTED PARENT ACTIVITIES

1. Identify buses in the community. Discuss their various functions, e.g., school buses, commercial buses, city buses.

2. Have child accompany you on a trip using the city bus. Discuss location of bus stops, the use of money or tokens, schedules, proper methods of entering and leaving the bus, proper behavior while riding the bus, etc.

3. Allow the child to call for information regarding the proper time and place to catch the bus.

4. Have the child call for the proper time and place to catch the bus, deposit coins or tokens, and pull the cord for stopping at the proper destination.

SUGGESTED EVALUATION:

Accompany child on a trip to the movies. Allow the child to make all the necessary arrangements for getting to and from the destination.

III

GOAL: To possess and project a positive self-concept.

OBJECTIVE: The child will demonstrate a positive self-concept.

RATIONALE: A positive self-concept is important for an individual in working with others, preparing to make decisions, and ultimately in making appropriate career decisions.

SUGGESTED PARENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Label all articles belonging to the child. Discuss the importance of one's name and how each individual is different.

2. Assist the child in making a "precious box" where the most treasured possessions are kept. Emphasize the child's right to privacy.

3. Assist the child in assembling a picture book entitled "All About Me". Use pictures of the child at various stages of development to illustrate the story. Point out the activities the child once needed help with but now can do independently. Accentuate the positive.

SUGGESTED EVALUATION:

Look for overt signs that the child feels good about himself or herself, e.g., pride in his or her name, willingness to try new activities, etc.

APPENDIX C

DIRECTORY OF ORGANIZATIONS RELATED

TO THE HANDICAPPED

Alexander Graham Bell
Association for the Deaf
3417 Volta Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

American Association for
Rehabilitation Therapy, Inc.
P.O. Box 93
Little Rock, AR 72116

American Cancer Society, Inc.
219 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

American Orthotic and
Prosthetic Association
1440 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

American Physical Therapy
Association
1156 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

American Printing House
for the Blind, Inc.
1839 Frankfort Avenue
Louisville, KY 40206

The Arthritis Foundation
1212 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

American Association on
Mental Deficiency
5201 Conn. Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20015

American Association of
Workers for the Blind, Inc.
1511 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

American Foundation
for the Blind, Inc.
15 West 16th Street
New York, NY 10011

American Personnel and
Guidance Association
1607 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

American Podiatry
Association
20 Chevy Chase Circle
Washington, D.C. 20015

American Speech and
Hearing Association
9030 Old Georgetown Road
Washington, D.C. 20014

Association for Children with
Learning Disabilities (ACLD)
5225 Grace Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Boy Scouts of America,
Scouting for the
Handicapped Division
North Brunswick, NJ 08902

Council of Organizations
Serving the Deaf
P.O. Box 894
Columbia, MD 21044

Epilepsy Foundation
of America
1828 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Federation of the
Handicapped, Inc.
211 West 14th Street
New York, NY 10011

Human Resources Center
Willets Road
Albertson, NY 11507

The Industrial Home
for the Blind
57 Willoughby Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

International Association of
Rehabilitation Facilities, Inc.
5530 Wisconsin Avenue (#955), N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20015

Muscular Dystrophy
Associations of America, Inc.
810 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10019

Bureau of Education of the
Handicapped; U.S. Office
of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

The Council for Exceptional
Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Federation Employment and
Guidance Service
215 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10003

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
Scouting for Handicapped
Girls Program
830 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

ICD Rehabilitation and
Research Center (Formerly
Institute for the Crippled
and Disabled)
340 East 24th Street
New York, NY 10010

International Association
of Laryngectones
219 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Library of Congress: Division of
the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Washington, D.C. 20542

National Association of the Deaf
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Association of
Hearing and Speech Agencies
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Association of the
Physically Handicapped, Inc.
6473 Grandville Avenue
Detroit, MI 48228

National Center for A Barrier Free Environment
7315 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20014

National Congress of Organizations of the Physically Handicapped, Inc.
7611 Oakland Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55423

National Federation of the Blind, Suite 212
1346 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

The National Hemophilia Foundation
25 West 39th Street
New York, NY 10018

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P.O. Box 1492
Washington, D.C. 20013

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
257 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010

The National Association for Mental Health, Inc.
1800 North Kent Street
Arlington, VA 22209

National Association for Retarded Citizens
2709 Ave. E East, POB 6109
Arlington, TX 76011

National Clearing House for Mental Health Information
National Institute of Mental Health
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20852

National Easter Seal Society for Crippled Children and Adults
2023 West Ogden Avenue
Chicago, IL 60612

The National Foundation/ March of Dimes
1275 Mamaroneck Avenue
White Plains, NY 10605

National Inconvenienced Sportsmen's Association
3738 Walnut Avenue
Carmichael, CA 95608

National Industries for the Blind
1455 Broad Street
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

National Paraplegia Foundation
33 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60601

National Rehabilitation Association
1522 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.
79 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Paralyzed Veterans of America
7315 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 301-W
Washington, D.C. 20014

President's Committee on Mental Retardation
7th and D Streets, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Rehabilitation
International USA
17 East 45th Street
New York, NY 10017

Sister Kenny Institute
1800 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55404

United Ostomy
Association, Inc.
1111 Wilshire
Los Angeles, CA 90017

U.S. Civil Service Commission
1900 E Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415

National Rehabilitation
Counseling Association
1522 K Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

National Therapeutic
Recreation Society (A Branch
of the National Recreation
and Park Association)
1601 North Kent Street
Arlington, VA 22209

The President's Committee on
Employment of the
Handicapped
Washington, D.C. 20014

Professional Rehabilitation
Workers with the
Adult Deaf, Inc.
314 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Rehabilitation Services
Administration
330 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

United Cerebral Palsy
Associations, Inc.
66 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016

United States Employment
Service
Washington, D.C. 20213

APPENDIX D

PARENTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN
FACT SHEET

What are some of the problems facing parents of handicapped children?

Parents confronted with the challenge of raising a handicapped child are inevitably overwhelmed by questions. What is the best thing to do -- right now? Should parents try to find a preschool program? Are there good elementary programs in the area that will make the most of the child's abilities? If not, what should parents do? A young child spends so much time at home -- can parents help him during these valuable hours? How? Will raising a handicapped child put too great a strain on the marriage? How will other brothers and sisters react? Where can parents turn for support, answers to pressing questions, and direction to services that are truly responsive to a child's needs?

Many parents searching for help talk of "hitting a stone wall." All too often, parents are given a diagnosis (sometimes in medical terms they barely understand) and have no idea at all what to do next. The need for information is an enormous one especially the kind of information that encompasses the widest possible range, that is related to a child's own special problems, and that is based on identification with the experiences of the parents.

Parents need to know not only about the educational and medical or therapeutic programs but also about opportunities for recreation for their children and respite for themselves. They need to know about new ideas and hopeful developments in action for the handicapped and who their friends and allies are in the community. They need "how to" information: how to stimulate a young child's development, how to work with teachers and other professionals in bringing out their child's potential, how to act effectively to bring about new programs when services are inadequate or nonexistant.

Getting this kind of information can make a crucial difference to handicapped children and their families. But it is no easy task.

How do parents find the services their child needs?

Frequently, it is necessary to consult several sources to find out what services are available. It is unlikely that the child's physician or the child's teacher is aware of all the services that are available. Members of local parent organizations are often experts on hard to find local services. Information and referral services are provided by local government and social service agencies (look in the telephone book under city or county government and consult the yellow pages under "Social Service Organizations"). Organizations such as Health and Welfare Councils, United Way, and Easter Seal Societies may also prove helpful. Also, Closer Look, the National Information Center for the Handicapped, is organized to link parents with sources of help that exist in their own communities.

What are the rights and responsibilities of parents with respect to their child's education?

A school system can seem very formidable to a parent who first takes a handicapped child in hand and goes to find out what is available. It is important for parents to know the steps to take to obtain services and the staff that have the responsibility for providing those services. Parents have a vitally important role in school conferences on evaluation and placement and in followup procedures that ensure programs are effective. This role, now acknowledged by law, means that parents must have increased familiarity with tests and diagnostic procedures as well as confidence in working with various members of the school team. There are trained advocates in a growing number of communities who can give parents the help they need in these situations. It is a big help, too, to learn basic diagnostic information since this will strengthen the parents as monitors of their child's school placement.

For years, parents went begging for educational services for their handicapped children. Now, state and federal laws have made it clear that education is every child's right. Legislation passed by Congress in 1975, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, requires that education be provided to all handicapped children no matter how severe their disabilities may be. Some states call

for programs to start at birth recognizing the remarkable progress that can take place when learning starts as early as possible.

Implementation of this law is going to require a concerted action by all concerned citizens. More than ever before, parents must learn to practice the art of practical politics -- to make sure that laws are backed by necessary funding. Coalitions have emerged in many parts of the country, uniting parent groups in their efforts to gain full public support for equal educational opportunities for handicapped children.

Why should parents join a parent group?

Parent groups have been a significant force at the national, state, and local levels in obtaining needed services and ensuring the rights of the handicapped to such things as an equal education. From the point of view of the individual parent, the greatest value of parent groups is probably the unique kind of understanding and support they can give. It helps to know that one is not alone and to have the advice and encouragement of others who have been through similar difficulties. National, state, and local groups exist for most of the specific handicaps.

The world in which parents of handicapped children are living is changing dramatically. Parents are seen more and more as equal partners with professionals in planning educational programs and helping to carry them out. There is more hope than ever that handicapped children will not be stigmatized by being "different," but will be accepted and respected individuals in the community.

The greater the awareness parents have of their role, the more power they will have to push open doors that are still closed, change rigid and antiquated attitudes, and see their children grow to an adulthood that holds independence and the greatest possible fulfillment.

Checklist for Action

- Find out from other parents which professionals have been most helpful.
- Join a parent group to obtain personal support and information as well as to increase the group's strength to promote better services.

- Keep a record of observations and all correspondence with professionals and schools.
- Know what rights are guaranteed by law and persist in obtaining an educational program and related services that are appropriate.
- Recognize that feelings of despair, fatigue, and guilt are common to all parents, especially parents of handicapped children. Get the emotional support needed from other parents or professional counselors.

RESOURCES

Alexander Graham Bell
Association for the Deaf
3417 Volta Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

American Coalition of Citizens
with Disabilities
1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
#817
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Council for the Blind
1211 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
506
Washington, D.C. 20036

Association for Children with
Learning Disabilities
5225 Grace Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

Closer Look
National Information Center
for the Handicapped
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, D.C. 20013

Epilepsy Foundation of America
1828 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

International Association of
Parents of the Deaf
814 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Association for
Mental Health
1800 North Kent Street
Rosslyn, VA 22209

National Association for
Retarded Citizens
Post Office Box 6109
2709 Avenue E East
Arlington, TX 76011

National Association of Parents
of the Deaf-Blind
525 Opus Avenue
Capitol Heights, MD 20027

National Association of the
Physically Handicapped
6423 Grandville Avenue
Detroit, MI 48228

National Easter Seal Society
for Crippled Children and
Adults
2023 West Ogden Avenue
Chicago, IL 60623

United Cerebral Palsy Association
66 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016

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